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# Texas Eastern University: Its Mission and Challenge

University of Texas at Tyler

TEXAS EASTERN UNIVERSITY: ITS MISSION AND CHALLENGE

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An Address  
on the occasion of inauguration  
as first president of  
Texas Eastern University  
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I thank the board of regents, faculty, students, staff and you who are the friends of Texas Eastern University for your efforts in making this special occasion in the life of Texas Eastern possible. If there were sufficient time, I would like nothing more than to acknowledge by name all who are here today and point out the significant and vital roles you have in relation to this university. Since I cannot do this, I ask that each one here accept, in a personal way at this moment, my expression of appreciation on behalf of the university for your presence and for the special relationship which each of you has with the institution. Thank you all sincerely for participating in this historic day for Texas Eastern University which was planned to coincide with the bicentennial year of the United States of America, the great country we all love so much.

At this time I wish to recognize some people who are very special to me -- my family -- without whose help, encouragement and understanding love, it would not be possible for me to have the privilege of being a part of this activity with you today.

I believe there is a commonality in all of life and that is learning or education from which can come unity, wholeness, assimilation, progress. On August 16, 1972 I had the happy experience of standing at this same location and making my first public statement as President of Texas Eastern University. Among other things, I stated that the primary concern of this institution would be the student. To qualify that statement, I mentioned that a basic goal would be to provide the academic atmosphere and academic discipline vital to the students' sound intellectual growth and character development.



Fundamental to the achievement of success in such an endeavor is the development of a quality instructional program, and this requires that we attract professors who desire involvement in an institution which stresses teaching. The faculty are the keepers of knowledge; the faculty are responsible for the quality of the product which the institution produces. To accomplish such a task, the faculty must always be attentive to preserving the integrity of knowledge. Indeed, in my opinion, the most important responsibility of human intellectual activity is to maintain the integrity of knowledge. For knowledge and its integrity are of basic importance to educational institutions and thus to our civilization.

There has been in recent years, and it continues today, a great concern over whether we in higher education should be educating students for the world of work only, or for intellectual development only. I believe that this concern presents a false dichotomy. There is no necessary "either/or" choice between theory and practice. Both should be stressed. The one is both as intellectual and as pragmatic as the other. It is important to know about the world of work; it is also important to know the ideas that motivated the founding fathers two hundred years ago; and it is vitally important to know the contemporary intellectual, political and aesthetic forces that are inevitably moving our society and our culture into the future. We must be practical, but we must also cherish our dreams. The ideal of perfectibility must always lay claim to our imagination. Indeed, today's practice or reality was yesterday's theory, and today's theory may well be tomorrow's practice or reality.

No institution can be all things to all people, however. There are simply certain physical limitations to this being possible. An institution's outstanding service comes from superior achievement in a well-defined area or areas based largely on institutional resources. And the resources of a



university are at a minimum seven: personnel, facilities, time, the printed word, equipment, reputation and dollars. Spreading any or all of these resources too thinly tends to support mediocrity, and no university should subscribe to anything less than superior achievement in those program areas which it emphasizes. A balance of resources is mandatory. A university should lead and set high standards. It should do well in all its attempted endeavors; and interest in effective teaching and relating theory to practice so that students can, upon completing a program of study, contribute in worthwhile ways to our society, is at the heart of Texas Eastern University.

I wonder why such a small number of institutions of higher learning in our country are noted as great teaching institutions. Research constantly claims such a great deal of attention. Of course, research is very vital and important to education and society. But in our zeal for progress through research, we should not lose sight of the large number of students who seek and have a right to expect superior instruction by enlightened, inspired, devoted and capable teachers. For while it is correct and appropriate to commend those who increase knowledge and learning through research, it is also correct and appropriate to commend and sanction the interpreter of knowledge, the teacher -- who is no less essential and significant in the makeup of intellectual progress. I hope that the history of Texas Eastern University from the beginning will record that this institution provided superior instruction. For after all, the bedrock of education is the relationship between the teacher and the student. A superior teacher must, without question, be proficient in his or her academic area, but it is also very important that the teacher be proficient in working with individual students in a meaningful, professional relationship. Individual development is important. Albert Einstein pointed this out very simply yet very

profoundly when he said, "All that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded the individual." The American democratic tradition rests on this premise. And we should be reminded in our democracy in these days of competitive thrusts for political power, that only through trustworthy education of our citizenry can we be governed and yet remain free.

The challenges of effective and creative teaching; of the preparation of students for occupational roles; of prudent cultural interpretation; of intellectual awareness and perception; of the development in students of those qualities which are important to their being vitally involved and contributing citizens; of providing emphasis to ethical and moral development: these are concerns which I consider of prime significance to Texas Eastern University. These are the goals to which my colleagues and I can appropriately devote our best thought and energy. And having the unique experience of making these inaugural remarks after serving almost four years as president of the institution, I can state with a good measure of confidence that tangible success has already accrued in the pursuit of these goals and aspirations. But much is yet required. And agreeing with Aristotle that "It is they who act who rightly win the prizes," we will continue to move, through vigorous action, toward the achievement of that which is required.

I was offered and accepted this office of leadership on August 7, 1972. I believe in a higher leadership and power than any of us can provide as human beings, and I believe that it was under this higher leadership -- the providence of Almighty God -- that I was extended this opportunity of professional service. Unquestionably, I know that I accepted the office because of that circumstance. I accepted this presidency with the conviction that the college and university presidency is distinctly important in American higher education. Further, I believe that the office needs



renewed strength in the contemporary educational enterprise so that it can more effectively fulfill its principal responsibilities.

I would be unpardonably negligent if I did not recognize and acknowledge that these responsibilities cannot be effectively performed without a board of regents which gives an unusual amount of time and thought to the institution; a faculty and staff dedicated to serving the most noble charge implied in and inferred from the word education; a student body that has dared to become a part of a new institution and already is intently alive to the welfare of their university and clearly conscious of the personal opportunities that are available through its program; an alumni body, although small in number, that is interested in the program and progress of the university: these who have internal association with the university, along with the citizens of our region and the State of Texas generally who provide external interest and support, are vitally important to Texas Eastern University.

It is, indeed, a privilege and a pleasure to assist in leading this university to the positive destiny that surely awaits it. Working together unselfishly to maintain a quality educational program at Texas Eastern, we can inaugurate intellectual and pragmatic forces of infinite proportions. To the fulfillment of this ideal I renew my commitment.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, "Do that which is assigned to you and you cannot hope too much or dare too much." Upon assuming this office, I did not make any extravagant claims; at least, I did not consider them so. I did, however, make one promise: to work hard at making this institution one in which the citizens of Texas could take pride. And I have come to this office with the sincere desire to do that which has been assigned to me. Moreover, I am firmly convinced that we together, under the leadership of Divine Authority, cannot



hope too much or dare too much as we continue to recognize that there is a commonality in all of life and that is learning or education from which can come unity, wholeness, assimilation, progress.